DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 167 874 CG 013 270

AUTHOR Baum, Michael C.
TITLE Organizational Politics and the Entry: Process of the New Professional Psychologist.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 10p.; Not available in hard copy due to marginal legibility; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August, 1978)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS *Consultants; Employer Employee Relationship; *Entry Workers; Leadership Styles; Organizational Climate; *Organizational Communication; *Power Structure; *Professional Personnel; *Psychologists; Role Models

ABSTRACT

Applying a consultative model to the process of entering a profession, understanding organizational politics, and experiencing the need to prove oneself are all important to the new psychologist. Organizational entry for the new professional is analogous in many respects to the entry of a consultant into an organization. Using this assumption, it is then possible to apply a consultative model for making that entry a smooth and productive one. Organizational structure, power, norms, leadership style, sanctions, and rewards are concepts which can be used to enhance the new psychologist's effectiveness. Also important are organizational politics, focusing on the importance of learning the organization's informal and formal history, discovering alliances, and developing strategies for working within the informal communication network. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED167874

ORGANIZATIONAL POLITICS AND THE ENTRY PROCESS OF THE NEW PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Michael C. Baum, Ph.D.
Illinois State University
Student Counseling Center

HARD COPY NOT AVAILABLE

Paper presented at the annual
Convention of the American Psychological
Association, Toronto, Canada, August, 1978

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M C Baum

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

CG013270

If the world were fair, entering an organization should be a relatively simple task. This principle should be particularly true for the new professional for whom ease of organizational entry could be seen as a just reward for accomplishing two major goals: (1) finishing school (a doctor, no less); and (2) finding professional employment (no mean accomplishment itself these days). Since the initial assumption does not seem to be borne out by my experience, it will come as no surprise that the first year out in the world of professional psychology is often as difficult as the last year in as a graduate student.

If any of you still held any illusions regarding your entry into the organization which hired you, the previous presentations should have at least dimmed the "rosey-er" tints of those fantasies.

Lest you become overwhelmed with dismay however, I have been given the task of finishing this symposium with some prescriptive advice. My advice to you, simply put, come down to this: Employ the skills which you have so ably developed during the last three to five years of graduate training to facilitate your transition from graduate student to new professional member of an organization. In particular, I suggest you employ the ideas and skills you may have developed as an organizational consultant. If you have never been exposed to these ideas, then I recommend spending some hours of your transitional time reading in the area.[1] For even if the basic ideas, skills and role of an organizational consultant are unfamiliar to you, most likely you have developed several of the more basic skills, skills which would be necessary to apply an organizational consultative model to help organize and facilitate your entry.

It is not my intention to attempt here to map out both the steps an organizational consultant takes during entry, nor to draw all of the parallels between this process and the entry of the new professional into his or her work group. Rather, I will attempt to outline some of the steps which are conceptualized to be important during entry and will explore a few of the major dimensions of organizational assessment, which would be useful to the new professional to assess during entry. Finally, I will briefly touch upon the issue of establishing or proving one's competence.

Most, if not all, of the organizational consultation literature places heavy emphasis on the process of contact and entry (e.g. Lippitt & Lippitt, 1978; Mannino, etal, 1975; Perrow, 1970; Schein, 1969). The entry period is viewed as a particularly important time, for it is during this period that many of the initial impressions and expectations are formed of the consultant by the organization, and of the organization by the consultant.. It is not at all surprising to learn then, that one would profit from the care taken in monitoring and, to some extent, controlling what impressions are formed of them. One need only think of the characteristics which might be considered important by the organization to have some idea of how to present oneself. Here again, some of the organizational consultation literature provides detailed prescriptions concerning issues such as appropriate dress, punctuality, language, etc.

The expectations of both the consultant and the organization represent another major issue which is confronted during entry. One recommendation coming from the consultation literature is to make one's first contact with the individual who is responsible for bringing one into the organization. This could be a department chairperson, organizational director, chief

administrator, etc. It is with this person, at least initially, that the consultant begins to clarify the expectations (contract) held for him or her by the organization. It is here too, where the consultant presents her own or his own desires.

For the new professional entering into an organization, this process often involves talking with the director or chairperson about professional agreements, discussing evaluation criteria, learning of any steps which must still be taken to ligitimize his or her position within the organization, etc. This is the time to formalize special agreements. For example one may be hired on with the expectation that continued employment is predicated on the accomplishment of specific tasks (e.g. Ph.D. requirements, research, continuing education, liscening, etc.). Or alternatively, one may have had agreements which represent some condition they placed on the organization prior to agreeing to join the organization (research funds, role clarification, etc.). Entry is the time recommended by the consultative model for clarifying and formalizing these expectations. This process is seen not only to head-off future difficulties, but also as a means of ligitimatizing the process of negotiations of expectations and of making the implicit, explicit.

During initial contact with the organizational head, the consultative model suggests beginning to gather data about the organization -- data which will help one to function more effectively within the organization. Some examples of the kinds of information which this model would direct one to collect are: (1) What is the formal power structure? (2) How does it relate to the informal one? (3) How is responsibility delegated and authority shared? (4) What is the organization's history? (5) What have been its goals and what are they now? (6) What obstacles are seen to impeed the accomplishment of organizational goals? (7) In what areas do conflicts arise among organizational members?

(8) How well is the organization interfacing with other organizations within its environment (i.e. with whom is it in competition? with whom have alliances been formed?) (9) What are the norms of the organization? And how are members rewarded or punished? Again, recognize that these questions represent merely a few examples of the kinds of information which an organizational/consultative model suggests collecting.

In addition to collecting such information from the initial contact person, the organizational consultant is strongly urged to seek-out similar information from other sources. In this regard, as a new professional, one might talk with other staff or faculty members in their department, with the support staff and with members of the community who interact with the organization but who are not themselves members. Formal communications which represent the organization (e.g. annual reports, staffing papers, communications to external organizations, etc.) also provide a special view of the organization. The point to be recognized here is that the organization appears differently from different perspectives. The more diverse the perspectives one can get of their organization, the more one can know it--how its seen, how it functions, etc. One final thought about this data collection phase:

Talking with organizational members can also provide an opportunity to get to know the people who make up the organization. This process of data collection can then become the beginning point for building the kinds of relationships which earlier presenters have stressed as being so crucial for your first year--relationships which will support and encourage the new professional.

Data collection concerning organizational dynamics can even be seen as a fundamental task of the organizational consultant. Schein (1969) in his book, Process Consultation: Its role in organizational development, makes

the point quite emphatically and goes on to suggest collecting data about six (6) areas of organizational process: (1) communication patterns (2) the roles members play in the organization; (3) how the organization solves problems and makes decisions; (4) group norms and their function; (5) patterns of formal and informal leadership; (6) inter-group and inter-member cooperation and competition.

One final word of caution: Avoid premature judgements, conclusion and alliances! It takes time to accomplish entry. The more time taken (within reason, of course), the better can one's knowledge of the organization become. This one recommendation can perhaps be the most important one for some to keep in mind. More new professionals have had difficulty with this issue than perhaps anyother. It is also the case that the more one knows about the organization one is a member of, the more effective one can be in addressing the next issue--proving competence. Note too, that this advise runs counter to the need to be taken into the organization quickly.

The first year out of the professional training sequence is a time when many feel the most intense pressure to prove to ourselves and to those around us, that we are indeed worthy members of the professional community,. For some individuals, their internship experience offers a helpful transition from student to professional, but for most, the real test of professional competence is seen to be performance on that first job. This emphasis on the first professional position is also reflected in the professional world. With the acceptance of one's first position, comes an automatic discounting of prior school and personal references. Future employers examine one's professional credentials and stress what was accomplished in that first position far more than graduate training evaluations and recommendations.

For some new professionals, this need to prove one's self merely requires conforming to the expectations of the new organization--"If I just do my job, everything will be OK." Just as often however, this perceived need to prove one's self leads the new professional into an early attempt to make his or her mark on the organization by changing it. This desire to bring about organizational change seems to be motivated by several things, a few of which are: (1) a genuine perception that the organization would function better if it were to alter itself; (2) a desire to make the new organization more like the one in which the individual was previously a member; (3) a belief that to attempt to affect change, is a way to experience one's own power and to become a part of the covert struggle for organizational influence; (4) a knowledge that bringing about organizational change is a way to establish one's credibility; (5) a recognition that to have an organization change at one's direction is a sign of inclusion and acceptance. Regardless of the motive or motives, affecting organizational change seems to be one way to attempt to demonstrate: "This place made the right decision whey they hired me, and they know it!"

Within the context of affecting organizational change as a way to prove one's self, the ideas found in the organizational and consultative litature can once again prove extremely helpful. This is particularly true given the indications that affecting organizational change is not always parallel to bringing about change in an individual, a point strongly emphasized in Katz and Kahn's (1966) chapter on affecting organizational change (p.391).

Time does not permit the development of the topic of how to affect organizational change at this time. Rather, it is suggested that the organizational development literature be consulted prior to attempting organizational change. Note too, when reading through the literature, that

special emphasis is placed upon the recognition that change is differentially affected by whether the change agent is a member of the organization or not.

Reference Notes

Note 1 Some references which come to mind are: Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1961; Schein, 1969; Perrow, 1970; Lippitt & Lippitt, 1978; and Mannino, MacLennan, and Shore, 1975.

References

Bennis, W.G., Benne, K.D. & Chin, R. (eds) The Planning of Change. New York: Holt, 1961.

Katz, D. & Kahn, R.L. The Social Psychology of Organization. New York: Wiley, 1966.

Lippitt, G. & Lippitt R. The Consulting Process in Action. LaJolla, Calif.: University Associates, 1978.

Mannino, F.V., MacLennan, B.W. & Shore, M.F. The Practice of Mental Health Consultation. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government printing office, D.H.E.W. #74-112, 1975.

Perrow, C. Organizational Analysis: A Sociological Perspective. Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1970.

Schein, E.H. Process Consultation. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1969.

Steele, F. Consulting For Organizational Change. University of Mass. Press, Amhurst, 1975.